

Afghanistan

Pre-Deployment Challenge

How was it addressed?

1. Preparing myself and family for extended departure
 - a. Updating will and power of attorney
2. Completion of training and classes prior to UDC.
3. Completing pre-UDC paper work twice. Obtaining predeployment guidance. The Brigade Ops Center contractors were all cancelled about a month prior to my deployment. I did what I could myself. No one reviewed training folder or made travel/shipping arrangements.
4. Passing UDC medical requirements imposed by the USACE contracted medical doctor. I had to redo lab tests already completed at home station.
5. Updating information for POC's phone numbers and addresses.
6. Logistics for arriving in country
 - a. Addressed by continuously working through obstacles
7. Getting a UDC date
 - a. Addressed by going to CRC
8. Getting my DTS account approved due to new FY
 - a. Requested my travel voucher be approved as soon as the funding was applied for in FY11

Deployment Challenge

How was it addressed?

1. Downloading needed reference materials
 - a. Friends downloaded to CDs and forwarded
2. Setting up surveillance shop and shelter.
3. Explosive QD site planning and CORA process
4. Convincing unit you are there to help
5. Transportation to the FOBs
6. Ten years since working with ammunition at this level and not current on today's resources.
 - a. Spent time with departing QASAS to get up to date on the routine resources.
7. Having to wait 24 hours to get a flight from Ali Al Saleem, Kuwait to Bagram, Afghanistan.
 - a. Obtained a SPACER request form before I left the UDC from the QASAS in theater. This helped me get a flight out of Ali Al Saleem quicker
8. Have access to all ammo websites.
9. Constant moving target with respect to operations. Taught the designers/planners the importance of explosive safety, and provided guidance on the design/planning of new facilities.

10. In route communications was a problem. I could not use my Army laptop anywhere, including Ali Al Saleem to access AKO where contact information was kept.
11. Inexperience in review of site plans and QD
 - a. Addressed by research and using USATCES “Reach Back Cell”
12. Living in tent – trying to sleep with 150-200 decibel noise level
13. Personal hygiene
14. Indifference
 - a. Addressed through patience.
15. Getting into the top bunk.
 - a. Addressed it by deciding that sleeping on a mattress is better than sleeping on a dirty floor; and climbed up.
16. Location had no supplies to work with. Borrowed and scrounged for whatever we could find. Pallets, lumber, nails and seals were not available.
17. Mail hit or miss, could take 2 weeks to 2 months or never to arrive
18. Finding the right person to give me my life support and then my office equipment. It was a new positions so no one knew who was responsible
 - a. Talked to AMC commander who supplied life support
 - b. ASP unit supplied computer
 - c. TACOM supplied phone
19. Getting the deployed units to be willing to conduct their operations to minimum standards. While there is definitely a requirement to be flexible in certain situations to accomplish the mission, there is absolutely the opportunity to do things IAW Army regulation as well. In my experience, we can get close to the standard the majority of the time if we make an honest attempt.
 - a. Sat down with the Company XO’s and Company/Brigade Safety Officers to explain the benefits to taking the extra steps to make their operations safer.
20. Being separated from my wife and kids has been the most taxing part of the deployment.
 - a. Regular phone calls home and a strong spouse make it do-able. Skype video chat capability would have made it much better.

Will experience change the way current job is performed?

1. Appreciation of research needed for explosive safety, site planning, etc. for customer and DDESB
2. Was able to see ammunition in use and learn more about its function
3. Was able to see foreign ammunition and devices
4. Time management
5. Work towards changing the regulations so they adapt to a highly fluid environment
6. I am able to bring back relevant information for training curriculum.
7. Be more prepared for deployments

8. More aware that the level of ammunition training our soldiers are getting in AIT and beyond is not sufficient. By knowing this it will allow me to tailor training events to better suit the need of my home units. There is a great need to get “back to the basics”. By and large the only experience ammo troops get with ammo is when they are deployed.

Best preparation for Logistics/ES in Theater

1. Overlap of time with person in theater
2. Listening to advice from Ammo Lar/QASAS I replaced
3. Previous deployments
4. Previous overseas QASAS assignments
5. Working post, camp, and station assignments
6. Prior military experience
7. Review of Explosive Safety Bulletins from DAC homepage
8. Working at the workshop performing inspections on various types of ammunition
9. Ability to design and analyze using Autocad
10. Working closely with the unit Brigade Ammo Officer and the unit BLST Chief.
11. Patience, just be prepared for everybody to need everything right now and to have little to no control over when they get it.

Advice for Explosive Safety Specialist who are deploying

1. Learn to use Autocad
2. Learn NATO regulations
3. ES Specialists only advisers to Commanders
4. May need to assist with placement and design of new Ammo Supply Point facilities

Advice

1. Wait for UDC date
2. Be flexible
3. Prepare to live in less than adequate facilities
4. Do not compare Afghanistan to Iraq
5. Contact QASAS you are replacing in time to get information
6. Be familiar with Quantity Distance (QD) and ABL inspections
7. Acquire experience working with soldiers
8. Be current with resources being utilized today and acquire credentials needed for access to websites
9. Get as much “BAY” time as you can.
10. Study the YELLOWBOOK. Knowing your DODICs in theater is the UPMOST importance

11. Brush up on all conventional ammo processes, ACRs, DSRs, MHP, inspection criteria
12. This is not a depot environment. It is an ASP during war time. The war does not stop because you do not have something. At the ASP the Accountable Officer is the Boss. We are here to help the AO.
13. Think about what you are trying to accomplish and then do the best you can.
14. Location was new. Communications, DSN and internet, was intermittent. Used mostly AKO and Yahoo account
15. Work with warfighter all the way up the chain of command
16. If you think you will be using a tent and port-a-potty for every deployment you will never be disappointed
17. Contact everyone you can think of to get their opinions of what to bring and what contact emails you may need in once in theater.
18. Inform your family of Red Cross contact information
19. Make sure you have access to MHP. You will need to contact your deployment location to get their DODAAC and UIC. Send this info to MHP so they can add you into these locations. All personnel must use this system to input the munitions history.
20. Be prepared to start from scratch with SOP's/Desk Procedures, etc.
21. Brush up on Malfunctions, Explosive Safety, Quantity Distance, Explosive Licensing and the Certificate of Risk Acceptance process.
22. Anyone can point out the problems. Come to the table with solutions or at least options.
23. Backup any publications and documents to disk you might need for deployment and hand carry them with you to your duty location
24. You also have a share folder in AKO. You can back up a lot of publications and data to this location and it will be accessible anytime you can get on AKO
25. GET OFF THE FOB! The units at the small outlying locations usually have no 89B ammo soldiers at these sites and are starving for some technical guidance. Most are willing and want to do the right things but need a push and someone to show them what right looks like.
26. Make sure you are current on HAZMAT and the ISO inspection certifications.

Greatest achievement

What led to that success?

1. Helped to finalize site plan for new Ammo Supply Point
2. Assisting the coalition forces in ammunition issues and concerns
3. Moving serviceable munitions to where they are needed
4. Setting up the surveillance workshop
5. Cleaning up the ammo lines that have unserviceable assets
6. Going through SAAS with the assistance of the SAAS NCOIC
7. Creating policy and staffing that policy

8. Creating an atmosphere of cooperation among the multiple nations and the US Service components. Listening to the needs of each party and stressing the need to reduce hazards to personnel, facilities, and equipment.
9. Supporting the soldier and passing on information to first time deployed Ammo LARs and QASAS. Providing information that leads to success.
10. Traveled to all the ASPs and ATHPs in Afghanistan and a few unit FOBs/PRTs.
 - a. This success was because of the desire to know what was out there and what was going on.
11. Getting the units to follow any safety procedures at the FARP, CARP's and ATHP
12. Getting computers with internet in the ASP surveillance office
13. Assisting the TF with their ammunition storage problems because they are located in an area which has other entities around them
14. Establishing a good working relationship with Army, Marine Corp, and Air Force
15. Getting huge amounts of excess "legacy" ammunition turned back into the ATHP so it could be inspected and pick back up to record.
 - a. Amnesty program is the key to success when dealing with legacy ammo

Information to Share

1. Important to know DOD 6055.09, DA PAM 385-64 in regard to site planning.
2. Ability to interact with military personnel
3. Determine, foster, nurture, and follow appropriate command structures.
4. Experience deployment
5. Know QD
6. Get HAZMAT recertification
7. Don't be afraid to ask questions and be willing to listen
8. Be able to address "don't care" attitude regarding storage and safety of ammunition
9. Research the country and customs of Afghanistan. Traveling during winter months is difficult
10. Know how to fill out a Malfunction report.
11. Know how to do Basic Load Inspections (ABL)
12. Be familiar with MIL STD 129 and MIL STD 709D
13. Have general know of all types of ammunition
14. You are there to support the warfighter
15. Your focus should be on increasing explosive safety awareness in theater and not be influenced by others outside the theater
16. Composite Risk Management (CRM) is an operational tool and the CoRA is documentation of the CRM process. Teach the soldiers to use the CRM so it will be an effective tool. The CRM and the CoRA belong to the users.

17. Know your ammo serviceability/condition codes and basic handling/explosive safety.
18. Press the big issues.
19. Flights were difficult to arrange. Civilians were at the bottom of the list and got bumped.
20. You do what you can with what you have
21. Back up your data
22. Be flexible, everyone is in the same boat as you
23. Develop a good relationship with your Accountable Officer. He/she is responsible for what goes on inside the ASP and can make your suggestions happen many times much easier than you.
24. The serviceability of the munitions we issue out should not be in question and they must be safe for use.
25. Follow the UDC requirements to the letter and your time spent there will be easy.
26. Living conditions vary greatly at the deployed locations. Be prepared to be flexible. Some locations have wet CHU's. My current location has us in tents. . You will get a bunk with a terrible mattress.....expect nothing else.
27. Internet is a given at some locations but not all. While it is available here it is extremely slow....no way to Skype with the family back home.
28. The Amnesty program is your friend. While it might be frustrating at times, at the end of the day those munitions are safer when someone is accountable for them and they have been inspected for serviceability. Don't waste time trying to figure out why they were left that way.